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FOR THE PRESIDENT FROM AMBASSADOR ALFRED HOFFMAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/07/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PO](#)

SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR THE PRESIDENT'S SEPTEMBER 17  
MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER SOCRATES

Classified By: Ambassador Alfred Hoffman for  
reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

11. (SBU) Mr. President:

Your meeting with Prime Minister Socrates -- two months into Portugal's EU presidency -- provides an excellent early opportunity to try to shape the Portuguese government's priorities in a direction consistent with U.S. interests, both from a bilateral perspective and in the EU context.

Portugal - A Steadfast Ally  
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12. (C) Portugal, a founding member of NATO, is a steadfast ally that has consistently stood by our side over the years under both center-right and center-left governments. The President and Prime Minister -- from opposing political parties -- each regularly stress that trans-Atlantic relations are a pillar of Portuguese foreign policy and that NATO is the primary guarantor of European security. At our request, Portugal ultimately withdrew its leading candidacy to host the 2008 NATO Summit in favor of Romania. In return, the USG agreed to support Portugal's bid to host the 2010 NATO Summit.

13. (SBU) Portugal has provided virtually free access to Portuguese air and seaports for military support operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, with over three thousand flights a year transiting Lajes Air Base in the Azores. It has also granted permission to use Lajes in support of repatriation of detainees from Guantanamo. Despite severe budgetary constraints, it is currently engaged internationally on numerous fronts with military personnel in Iraq, Afghanistan (where it has lost one soldier), East Timor, Kosovo, and Lebanon, and, until recently, in Bosnia and the Congo. Portugal has been an outstanding partner in the war on terror and collaborates actively with us as a member of the Proliferation Security Initiative, the Container Security Initiative, and the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism.

EU presidency priorities  
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14. (C) While agreement on the shape of a new EU treaty was achieved during the German presidency, detailed negotiation and signature of the document have fallen to the Portuguese presidency, which hopes to secure endorsement of a final text by the heads of government meeting in December. This internal EU task has not derailed Portugal's external policy goals, but it has absorbed scarce resources and high-level attention within the Portuguese government.

¶15. (U) Socrates and other senior Portuguese officials have noted that the EU's biggest foreign policy concern is along its southern and southeastern borders, which are threatened by radical Islam and poverty. He has proposed strengthening the EU's ties to Washington, Moscow, and Mediterranean countries to help contain radical Islam in that region; this strategy includes lending strong support to Turkish accession to the EU, involving the EU more closely in the Middle East Peace Process, and strengthening the EU's economic and cultural ties to the region through the Barcelona Process.

¶16. (C) So far during their Presidency, the Portuguese have taken a primarily facilitative approach, seeking broad consensus on most issues. They have dedicated their individual efforts to the few issues they care most about: a strategic partnership with Africa and the Middle East processes noted above. Beyond those issues, the Portuguese governmental structure has engaged in efforts to strengthen EU ties with Brazil, India, China, Russia, and Ukraine through high-profile summits.

¶17. (C) The EU-Brazil summit in Lisbon the first week of Portugal's presidency was successful in establishing a long-term relationship with a significant partner and energizing the debate in Europe on biofuels. Portuguese interlocutors candidly told us that they did not expect much and that the summit was only the first step toward an EU-Brazil strategic partnership, but that they were delighted with the outcome. We believe this may raise Portuguese ambitions for the other summits.

#### Suggested areas of focus

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¶18. (C) Kosovo: The Portuguese believe the current Troika-led negotiations are a necessary last effort but are not optimistic about the outcome. They believe Kosovar independence is inevitable, but worry about both the Kosovars moving too quickly and the perceived need to have Russian agreement on any solution. The Portuguese are working to find a legal mechanism that permits individual member states to recognize an independent Kosovo absent a UNSCR, and that provides the basis for deployment of an EU rule of law mission. They need to hear from you that leaving Kosovo in limbo is not an option, that giving Russia veto power over foreign policy challenges in the heart of Europe sets a troubling precedent, and that the world needs resolution on this troubling issue this year.

¶19. (C) Russia: Prime Minister Socrates visited Moscow recently and was criticized in many quarters for his failure to address Russia's aggressive behavior against EU allies Poland and Estonia, human rights issues, or Moscow's penchant for rhetoric and gamesmanship on energy and security. Portugal currently does not depend on Russia for any energy needs, although that dynamic may be changing, given recent collaborative efforts between the national oil company and Gazprom, and Gazprom's collaboration with Algeria's Sonatrach, which provides a majority of Portugal's natural gas needs. Socrates's advisors suggested to us following the trip that we needed to tone down our own rhetoric in order to elicit more constructive engagement from Moscow. One senior advisor even suggested that our plan to place the missile defense system in Poland and the Czech Republic -- the two more problematic EU member states -- had not helped matters when we wanted the EU to come to our defense.

¶10. (C) Middle East: The Portuguese believe they have little historical baggage in the region and thus can advance progress on key issues. They have stressed many times and at the highest levels that the Road Map is the way forward, but that it needs to be reinvigorated. Foreign Minister Amado has traveled extensively to the Middle East and was one of the first to call for a special session of EU Foreign Ministers at the onset of last summer's hostilities in

Lebanon. In addition, Portugal has contributed an Army engineering company to UNIFIL. Portugal shares our deep concerns about Iran's nuclear weapons program and has been very supportive of efforts to increase pressure on Tehran.

¶11. (C) Afghanistan: Portuguese Special Forces and other troops serve without caveat and are engaged in heavy fighting in the volatile south. In addition, in response to an appeal from the United States, Portugal recently agreed to assume leadership of one Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team (OMLT). The Portuguese stress that they are with us in Afghanistan for the duration of NATO operations so congratulations for their current contributions are in order as well as encouragement to continue. Portugal has contributed \$2 million in assistance; however, they are financially over-stretched and have not given more because of budgetary constraints.

¶12. (C) Iraq: Portugal had an infantry company in Iraq for two years and also contributed trainers for the police training mission. Portugal recently downsized its diplomatic presence in Baghdad because of cost (its operations were four times as expensive as any other embassy), but let us know far in advance and wanted to coordinate what they said publicly as they were sensitive to the political ramifications.

¶13. (C) Africa: Portugal has a special relationship with Africa, particularly with its former colonies. It intends to host an EU-Africa Summit, although it has tried to deflect diplomatic conflict over the potential attendance of Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe who is subject to an EU travel ban. The UK, the Netherlands, and others may not attend at the head of government level should Mugabe participate. Although the Portuguese have led the development of an action plan between the EU and African Union, the negative ramifications of Mugabe's presence in Lisbon could overshadow any accomplishments.

¶14. (SBU) Major Economies Meeting: Socrates was pleased that Portugal, in its capacity as EU President, was invited to represent the European Union at the September 27-28 Major Economies Meeting on Climate Change and Energy Security in Washington. He is strong proponent of environmental issues, having served as Environment Minister from 1999-2002. The current Environment State Secretary Humberto Rosa is scheduled to lead the delegation.

#### Particular Bilateral Points

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¶15. (SBU) The Portuguese government has, at the highest levels, stressed its interest in collaborating with the United States to strengthen security and stability in Africa, an effort which has begun in earnest. We are conducting joint demining training in Guinea-Bissau and are looking at developing an HIV prevention program for African armed forces. We are also exploring opportunities to work together in the Special Operations arena in Africa. We hope to include the Portuguese in peacekeeping training in Mozambique and Angola under the African Contingency Operations training and Assistance (ACOTA) program and a joint State-Defense team from Washington recently visited Lisbon to discuss further opportunities. In addition, our Department of Commerce has been working with Portuguese counterparts on a program to computerize Angola's judicial records.

¶16. (S/NF) Socrates agreed to allow the repatriation of enemy combatants out of Guantanamo through Lajes Air Base on a case-by-case basis. This was a difficult decision, given the sustained criticism by Portuguese media and leftist elements of his own party over the government's handling of the CIA rendition flights controversy. Socrates's agreement has never been made public. The Attorney General's Office was forced to review a dossier of news clippings and unsubstantiated allegations regarding CIA rendition operations through Portugal provided by a member of the European Parliament. The AG's report should be released in

the near future. Although we cannot predict its conclusions, government insiders and legal scholars have told us there was no useful or prosecutable information in the dossier.

Prime Minister Socrates

¶17. (C) Socrates is a telegenic and charismatic leader, who worked hard to improve his English in advance of the EU presidency. He relies on advice from a small circle of advisors. He is a very moderate Socialist who has been successful at co-opting or marginalizing the leftists in his party, from whom he has taken some heat for his pro-U.S. policies. He also aggressively pursued his domestic agenda before assuming the EU presidency, achieving difficult labor and social security reforms and reducing Portugal's budget deficit to near EU-mandated levels.

Hoffman